WE CLAIM:

1. A stepladder comprising:

a step assembly and two independently articulated legs pivoted from a top cap, the step assembly having two side rails pivotally connected to the top cap along a common axis and one or more steps affixed therebetween;

a center post with an upper end and a lower end, the upper end fixed to the top cap, the center post extending downwardly and vertically from the top cap;

a sliding collar journaled on the center post;

leg braces, each leg brace pivotally affixed at a first end to the sliding collar and pivotally affixed at a second end to one of the legs, the leg braces of a length that the center post is at equal angles vertically to each leg;

an A-brace pivotally affixed at a first end to the sliding collar and pivotally affixed at a second end to the step assembly;

means on the sliding collar for maintaining the planes of extension for the rear legs and step assembly at equal radial angles with respect to each other;

the stepladder having an operable position defined by the sliding collar in a lowest position on the center post causing the rear legs and step assembly to be fully extended and a closed position defined by the sliding collar in a highest position on the center post causing the rear legs and step assembly to be substantially touching;

wherein the plane of extension for a rear leg is the vertical plane formed by the leg brace, the leg, and the center post and the plane of extension for the step assembly is the vertical plane extending through the center post and a bisector of the plane formed by the side rails, whereby the planes of extension are at 120° angles with each other.

2. The stepladder described in Claim 1, further comprising

a stop block journaled on the center post, the stop block supported by and resting upon a horizontal flange at a lower end of the center post.

3. The stepladder described in Claim 2, wherein the A-brace pivots from a tab connected to the uppermost step of the step assembly, so that the A-brace forms a platform.

4. The stepladder described in Claim 2, wherein the A-brace pivots from a tab connected each of the side rails and aligned with a step.

5. The stepladder described in Claim 1, wherein the side rails are parallel.

6. The stepladder described in Claim 1, wherein the sliding collar may be secured into a position on the center post by a latching assembly therein.

7. The stepladder described in Claim 1, wherein the sliding collar may be secured into a position on the center post by a locking assembly therein.

8. The stepladder described in Claim 7, further comprising an engagement locking hole in the center post and the latching assembly comprising

a locking pin supported by the sliding collar and sized for insertion into the engagement locking hole;

a lock release lever operatively connected with the locking pin for longitudinally moving the locking pin; and

a biasing means applying a biasing force to the lock release lever in a direction urging the locking pin into the locking hole;

whereby the locking pin is withdrawn from the engagement locking hole by manual pressure applied by a on the lock release lever and the locking pin maintains its engagement with the engagement locking hole in the absence of manual pressure on the lock release lever.

9. The stepladder described in Claim 8, wherein the lock release lever is operatively connected with the locking pin by a first set of teeth arcuately arranged along an upper edge of the lock release lever that are engaged with a second set of teeth arranged linearly along the lower edge of the locking pin.

10. The stepladder described in Claim 8, wherein a first end of the locking pin engaging the engagement locking hole is circular and a second end of the locking pin is square.

11. The stepladder described in Claim 8, wherein the biasing means is a spring.

12. The stepladder described in Claim 11, wherein the spring comprises two coils aligned along a common axis through the center of each coil.

13. The stepladder described in Claim 8, further comprising a plurality of engagement locking holes linearly arranged along the center post, a highest engagement locking hole at the highest position on the center post for the sliding collar and a lowest engagement locking hole at the lowest position on the center post for the sliding collar.

14. An actuating apparatus for a stepladder having a step assembly, a first leg, and a second leg, the legs being independently articulated, the legs and step assembly pivotally attached to a top cap, each leg pivoting along a vertical plane, the vertical planes separated by an angle of about 120°, the actuating apparatus comprising

a center post with an upper end and a lower end, the center post extending downwardly from an underside of the top cap, the center post with a horizontal flange at the lower end;

a sliding collar journaled on the center post, the sliding collar with a first housing, a second housing, and a third housing, each housing having a centerline, each centerline extending radially outward from the center post at an angle of approximately 120° with an adjacent centerline;

a means for locking the sliding collar at a position along the center post;

a first and second rigid leg brace, the first leg brace pivotally affixed at a first end within the first housing and pivotally affixed at a second end to the first leg, the second leg brace pivotally affixed at a first end within the second housing and pivotally affixed at a second end to the second leg, the leg braces of a length that the center post is at equal angles vertically to each leg;

an A-brace pivotally affixed at a first end within the third housing and pivotally affixed at a second end to the step assembly; the A-brace of such a length that it is substantially horizontal when the step assembly is fully extended; and

a stop block journaled on the center post, the stop block supported by and resting upon the horizontal flange.

15. The actuating apparatus described in Claim 14, further comprising

a latching assembly for securing the sliding collar at a position on the center post.

16. The actuating apparatus described in Claim 14, wherein the center post has a plurality of engagement locking holes linearly spaced along the center post.

17. The actuating apparatus described in Claim 16, further comprising

a locking pin supported by the sliding collar and sized for insertion into the engagement locking hole;

a lock release lever operatively connected with the locking pin for longitudinally moving the locking pin; and a biasing means applying a biasing force to the lock release lever in a direction urging the locking pin into the locking hole;

whereby the locking pin is withdrawn from the engagement locking hole by manual pressure applied by a on the lock release lever and the locking pin maintains its engagement with the engagement locking hole in the absence of manual pressure on the lock release lever.